

# Nurturing Extravagant Welcome in Our Congregation

The Bath Church, United Church of Christ  
Evangelism and Spiritual Life Committee, January 22, 2013  
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- 1. Where do you experience welcome and hospitality?**
- 2. Reclaiming Welcome and Hospitality as central to all we do and are.**
  - a. Hospitality in our lives and church is a response to God who welcomes and embraces each of us.
  - b. Welcome is the beginning of worship, for in welcoming one another, we welcome the divine 'shekinah', the holy presence of God that is in each person.
  - c. Welcome and hospitality were central to Jesus' ministry and teaching. Jesus warned that we would be blessed or judged by our hospitality to strangers.
  - d. Church members are hosts, sharing God's welcome with those who come to worship with us. Hosts see those they welcome not as visitors but as guests, welcomed guests who bear God's presence.
  - e. Welcoming Congregations build a culture of extravagant hospitality within the whole congregation.
- 3. Reclaiming Welcome and Hospitality for culture that is predominantly outside of church.**
  - a. Most churches think they are welcoming, because they welcome each other extravagantly.
  - b. Most people (especially new generations) outside the church say that the church is not welcoming, focused only on each other.
  - c. Most people are also looking for authentic welcome and community that 'receives me as I am' (but don't expect to find that welcome in church).
- 4. Welcoming Congregations are intentional in their hospitality.**
  - a. Express (authentic) Extravagant Welcome verbally and visually. (7 times)
  - b. Prepare and remind congregation that they are hosts.
    - i. Friendship booklet opportunity  
Gather e-mail, Facebook, etc.
  - c. Recruit and train greeters and ushers as welcoming team
    - i. Primary focus to welcome and identify guests.
    - ii. Introduce guests to others and pastors
    - iii. Hospitality Gift (including children)
    - iv. Collect guest information
    - v. Exit greeters and 'stealth' greeters

- d. Nametags –
  - i. Church Leaders and participants, then members, then guests
  - ii. Children nametags, stickers
  - iii. Guest nametags
  - iv. Nametags outside as people enter
  - v. Nametag collection plates at doors
- e. Hospitality moments (coffee/food) before/after worship

**5. Follow-up Extravagant Hospitality (seven contacts)**

- a. Data entered into church tracking software
- b. Put onto mailing list/online newsletter
- c. Nametag
- d. Written Note or e-mail from Pastor(s)
- e. Postcard to children
- f. Telephone Thank you call, church member and Pastor(s)
- g. Invitation to participate in event, class, etc.
- h. 'First Welcomers' (Breadwinners)

**Reaching new context of postmodern, 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

**6. Don't wait inside, take welcome/invitation/hospitality out of church**

- a. Meet the Neighbors and Neighborhood
  - i. Study demographics, MissionInsite
  - ii. Get around to neighbors/neighborhoods
- b. Cultural Events for folks outside of church
  - i. Epiphany Arts Festival (data collection/contacts)
  - ii. Book studies/discussions outside in cafes, bookstores
  - iii. Church meetings outside of church
  - iv. Eating out with groups or home meal evenings

**7. Identifying and 'Marketing' to focus population/niche**

**8. Program to welcome, meet and reflect focus population**

**9. Visibility, outreach and welcome on line**

- a. Facebook, social networking and media, advertisements, Yelp
- b. Website
- c. Twitter, Text Mail

**Website Resources**

<http://www.ucc.org/vitality/retreat-resources/>

<http://www.unitedchurch.org/>